

# Fightback

*Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism*

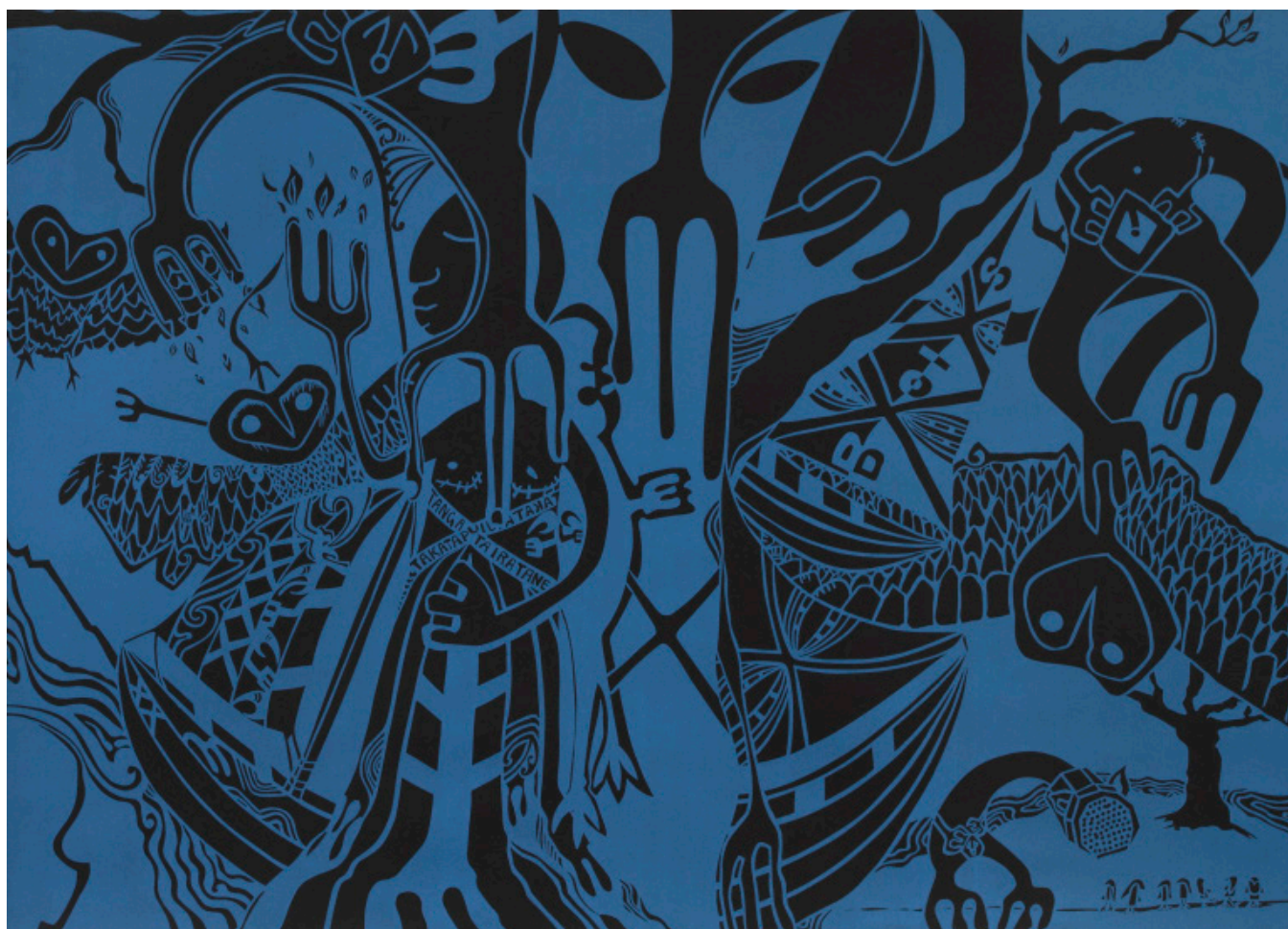
## INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES





Quarterly magazine published by Fightback  
ISSN: 1177-074, Vol. 6, No. 1, Issue 33  
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Note: We apologise that Tama Kapura  
Sharman's artwork Rarohenga in the last  
issue was printed in black and white, when  
it should have been printed in colour. We  
reprint it correctly below.



You can see more of Tama's work on Instagram at @tama\_couture.

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Subscriptions:

\$60 (AU/NZ) print

**\$20 (AU/NZ) PDF/EPUB**



# EDITORIAL

Welcome to Fightback's first issue of 2019, on the theme of *International Perspectives*. Over 2019, our remaining magazine issues will be *Syria: Revolution and Counter Revolution*; *Trans- and sex worker-inclusive feminism*; and finally, *Trade Unions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

This issue is structured on the principle of at least one article for each of the 7 continents, organised alphabetically. This structure is intended as an indicative measure to ensure a wide breadth of material – however, it's worth noting that the very naming of these continents, such as the structuring of the 'East' relative to Europe, is a colonial invention. I've also excluded Antarctica (though an ecological discussion of the continent could be pertinent: see 'Trump and Science' for discussion of climate science), and added the Middle East as a category. Whereas Fightback usually carries mainly original content, this issue is mainly reprinted from international sources, in the spirit of introducing international perspectives to a local audience. Our one original piece in this issue is written by an international correspondent, Jojo in Germany, writing on the antifascist movement. An intended through-line of the articles is a standpoint of solidarity with people rather than states, and a critical analysis of the machinations of various powerful international actors. We hope you find this material illuminating.

*Ani White, coordinating editor*

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# AFRICA

## CHINA-AFRICA: HARMFUL ILLUSIONS

*Paul Martial is a correspondent for International Viewpoint. He is editor of *Afriques en Lutte* and a member of the Fourth International in France.*

Beneficial for the populations or yet another calamity that is hitting the continent? The sixty billion in unconditional aid and loans granted by Xi Jinping to Africa seems to answer this question positively. And yet....

### **A south-south relationship...**

Liberalism obliges Western government to pretend to rejoice in the Chinese presence in Africa, and then immediately warn African governments of the many risks such as debt, economic dependence, environmental degradation... that the Middle empire would bring to their countries. While Chinese officials insist on peer-to-peer exchange and "win-win" relations, criticizing the selfishness of Western countries, as one journalist from *People's Daily* points out: "At the moment, some countries have vigorously engaged in unilateralism, protectionism and commercial hegemony. " [1]

In short, each criticizes the other's politics with arguments that are not so different in substance, which seems logical since Chinese politics in Africa, in fact and beyond rhetoric, is hardly different from that of Western countries.

Africa is essential for Beijing because it allows it to support its economic expansion by providing it with a significant share of the mining and oil products essential to its industrial activity. But Africa also allows it to diversify its sources of supply, and thus avoid relying exclusively on oil-exporting countries in the Middle East, considered strategic allies of the United States. The high commercial

tensions between the two countries justify the Chinese strategists' precautions.

Today the world's second largest economy, China has also become the leading economic power in Africa in terms of trade volumes, based on imports of raw materials and exports of manufactured goods. In 2017, volumes amounted to \$170 billion, compared to \$48 billion for France.

### **That looks like a north-south relationship**

China obtains its oil supplies from Nigeria and Angola; mining products such as iron, manganese, cobalt, copper... come from Zambia, South Africa, the DRC and Congo-Brazzaville.

In parallel with these imports, China exports massively its manufactured products, often cheaper than those of Western countries, even if the quality is not always there.

While African and Chinese customers have strong similarities in terms of purchasing power, according to marketing experts, Africa also acts as a test area for products and serves as a launch pad for conquering Western markets, as has been the case for Huawei brand mobile phones, for example.

As we can see, China's and Africa's economic exchanges remain fundamentally based on the international division of labour, within which the African continent remains confined to its sole role as a supplier of raw materials, forcing it to import most of the manual goods invoiced. It is this legacy of a colonial past that China, although not the only one, only reinforces.



## Let a hundred illusions flourish

While official speeches do talk about skills transfer and industrialization, in reality, little is happening. The few manufacturing companies, particularly in Ethiopia, widely promoted as the first steps in Africa's economic development, play a more attractive role.

Indeed, Beijing is promising African governments that they could benefit from the relocation of some Chinese companies, and some believe in it, such as the Togolese dictator Faure Gnassingbé: "We know that there are tens of millions of jobs in China that are ready to be relocated. So all companies in China that are ready to be relocated are always welcome." [2]

But it is unlikely that this phenomenon will take shape, for reasons of cost and productivity: "Faced with wage increases, companies based in China can automate their production lines (as subcontractors Foxconn do) and those considering leaving coastal areas have a wide range of choices: Western China, Southeast Asia, Bangladesh and India are all possible destinations. A comparison by the World Bank shows that, with the exception of Ethiopia, African countries have lower productivity than China and Vietnam in labour-intensive production. An assessment of unit labour costs concludes that they are higher in Africa than in Indonesia, Bangladesh and Vietnam. "» [3] Particularly as Chinese companies are far from being an example in the preservation of the environment or compliance with legislation. There are regular reports of violations of laws, and some companies are involved in smuggling on an industrial scale, particularly for logs. Chinese companies can easily compete with the Western multinationals Shell, Areva and Trafigura, which, in a few years, have managed to transform entire regions into industrial waste bins.

## Debt made in China

China continues to boast of its contribution

to the development of infrastructure in African countries. These infrastructures are above all an opportunity for African elites to enrich themselves and do not necessarily correspond to the economic and social needs of the populations, particularly when it comes to building stadiums, conference centres or presidential palaces as in Burundi, Mauritania, Sudan or Mozambique. Above all, however, these investments considerably increase the debts of African countries. In most cases, they are secured by the country's assets, which may be mines, ports, mining productions or oil concessions. The recent falls in commodity prices have therefore automatically increased the debt burden of African countries.

The result: *The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that five sub-Saharan African countries are over-indebted and that nine others may soon join them. Kenya's debt has recently passed the 5 trillion shillings mark [43 billion euros] and 72% of this amount is owed to China. This spring, Moody's downgraded Kenya's rating. The situation is also critical in Djibouti. Its debt is equivalent to 84% of its GDP and Beijing holds 82%. Zambia and Congo-Brazzaville, for their part, have taken out opaque loans from Chinese companies, the details of which have not yet been disclosed. [...]*

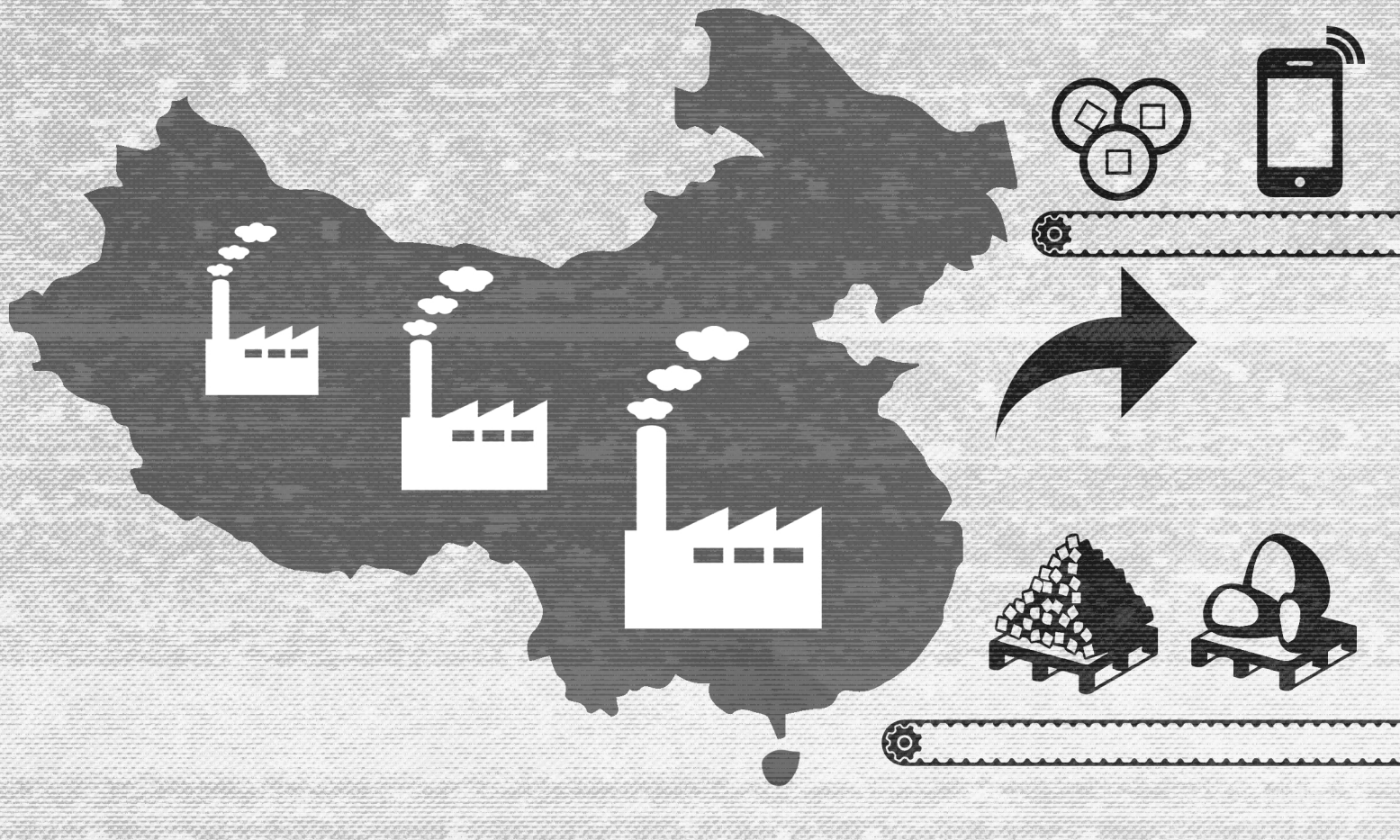
*Angola's debt to China is \$25 billion. The country's oil resources are used as a guarantee. In 2008, China granted a \$6 billion loan to the Democratic Republic of Congo in exchange for the right to operate several copper and cobalt mines. In Guinea, Beijing provided a \$20 billion credit line to the government, which enabled it to obtain aluminium concessions. [4]*

In the end, it is the people who know the consequences, seeing themselves imposed policies of budgetary restriction while Beijing takes over the wealth of countries.

## Military presence

While in China's official discourse the economic presence is linked to the major





project “One belt, one road”, enabling China to “mark its commitment to globalization without borders”, [5] Africa’s place in this system is essentially as a port and particularly concentrated on the East coast, hence the importance of Djibouti’s role.

Djibouti occupies a key position in the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, a real crossroads between the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Middle East and Africa, turning its strategic position into a real trade. This small state now has five military bases: the oldest is the French base, which hosts Spanish and German troops; Italy, Japan and the United States each have one; and the latest is China, which can accommodate nearly 10,000 troops. This base, presented by China as its contribution to the fight against piracy off the Somali coast, plays a key role in securing one of the most important shipping routes for the Chinese economy. A road that should become even more important in the future.

China’s military policy in Africa is not limited to Djibouti, as evidenced by the first “China-Africa Forum on Defence and Security” which, according to Ministry of Defence

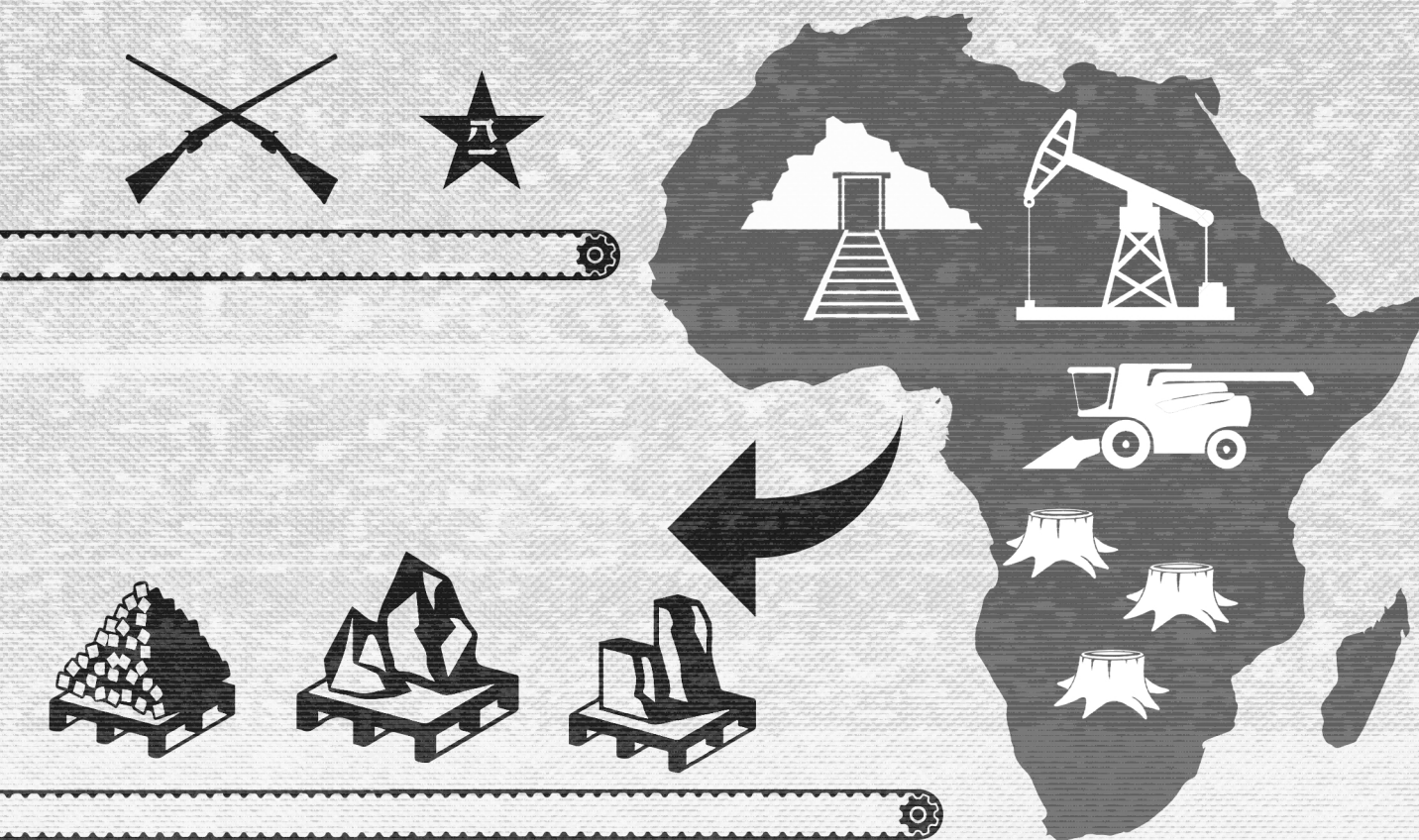
spokesman Ren Guoqiang, aims to “promote the building of a common destiny for China and Africa and to meet the needs of Africa’s new security situations and China-Africa defence cooperation.” [6]

Beijing is already the second largest contributor, after the United States, to “peacekeeping” operations, an essentially financial contribution, even though China has recently set up an 8,000-strong regiment capable of intervening quickly under UN auspices.

Talking about the military also means talking about arms sales and, in this sector, Chinese policy remains as harmful as that of the Western powers. Indeed, the Middle Empire does not hesitate to sell its weapons, especially small arms (those that cause the most casualties), to all governments that request it, flooding Africa with cheap assault rifles that only prolong wars, and make them much more costly in human lives.

The policies of Western powers, such as those of China or other emerging countries such as the In de, do not differ fundamentally from each other. China’s history, which has not had a history of slavery and colonialism,





and the fact that it shares with Africa the vicissitudes of poor countries, make the discourse of Chinese officials attractive. But China has come to be a leading imperialist power and now what Chinese leaders have in common with most African leaders is authoritarian and corrupt governance, exploitation and oppression of populations and destruction of the environment.

*Translated from **l'Anticapitaliste La Revue**, n°101, October 2018*

### Footnotes

[1] Zhong Fei, "La coopération Chine-Afrique va écrire une nouvelle page de l'histoire"

(China-Africa Cooperation to Write a New History), 28 August 2018, online.

[2] Interview with President Faure Gnassingbé "Ce qui est la base de la relation entre l'Afrique et la Chine c'est la concertation" (That which is the basis of the relationship between Africa and China is consultation... ), 27 August 2018, online.

[3] Jean-Raphaël Chaponnière, "L'empreinte chinoise en Afrique", (The Chinese footprint in Africa) *Revue d'économie financière* n°116, 2014/4, online.

[4] Julie Zaugg, "Comment la Chine alimente la dette africaine" (How China Fuels African Debt), *Le Temps*, 25 2018, online.

[5] Bernadette Arnaud, "Chine : la Ceinture et la Route, un projet mondial qui a un train d'avance" (China: The Belt and the Road, a global project that is one step ahead), *Sciences et Avenir*, 13 May 2017, online.

[6] Xinhuanet "China to host the first China-Africa Defence Forum", 1 June 2018, online.





# ASIA

## SHORT CUTS: AT PEKING UNIVERSITY

*Reprinted from London Review of Books.*

*Billy Beswick spent a year at PKU.*

The canteens at Peking University offer dishes from China's many culinary traditions: vegetable noodles spiced with chilli and Sichuan peppercorns, whole carp braised in soy sauce, fried chicken wings, pork dumplings, hot-sour soup with ho-fun, buns warm from the steamer, pancakes warm from the griddle, bitter melon fried with egg, potato strips sautéed in rice vinegar, cold red cabbage, dragon fruit, watermelon, strawberries, soya milk, green tea ice lollies with red bean. It's hard to spend more than the equivalent of about £2. There aren't always seats, but there is always a huge vat of free soup next to the chopsticks.

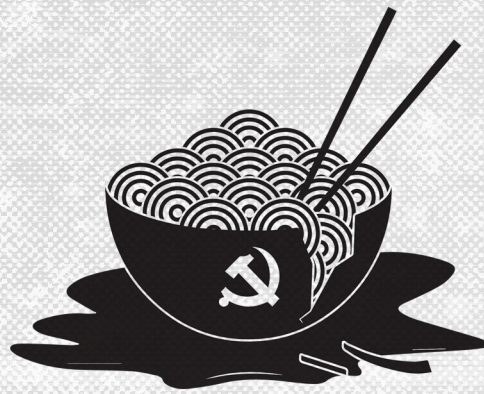
As you leave, a steely-faced woman empties your bowl into a wheelie bin. She's there when you arrive. And long after you've gone. According to a report published by the Peking University Marxist Society, canteen staff work up to 14 hours a day, six days a week, with one day off taken as two half-days. According to the report, they are not paid for all the hours they work, and, in at least three canteens, the majority of workers have no social insurance (it is the employer's responsibility to ensure all employees are covered). Most of them come from the surrounding provinces and moved to Beijing looking for work. They live in group dormitories underground.

The report, which examined workers' pay and living conditions across the university, can still be read on the PKU Marxist Society's public WeChat (mainland China's

most popular social media, messaging and payment app). But the letter posted by the head of the society on 20 September, after it had been unable to find a faculty adviser willing to support its registration for the new semester, is no longer available. The letter cited the report as an example of the society's contribution to campus life, and referred to its active support for workers' rights on campus. As well as canteen staff, the PKU Marxists have supported the construction workers who staged a protest in 2015 to demand unpaid wages. But as they noted, it isn't only university staff who have to deal with unfair labour conditions: 'If the situation is like this even within the walls of a university, how ruthless must the outside world appear when its mask of compassion and harmony is removed.'

A group of fifty Marxist student activists were detained in August after demonstrating in support of migrant workers at the Jasic Technology factory in Shenzhen, where there had been protests when several workers were detained and beaten after campaigning to set up a union independent of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, which has close ties to the Communist Party and to which all unions must be affiliated. The employees complained of poor working conditions and low wages, which weren't always paid in full; they also said that the company had not paid the proper amount into their social insurance schemes. Among those arrested were students and recent alumni from PKU, Nanjing University and





Renmin University. On 1 November, two Nanjing University students were assaulted by plainclothes policemen who were breaking up a demonstration of more than a hundred students protesting against their university's refusal to recognise its Marxist Society. (The intimidation of students led Cornell to end its relationship with Renmin at the end of October.) The PKU Marxist Society in the end succeeded in reregistering for the new semester, but when students formed a group to investigate the disappearance of 22 student activists from five cities over one weekend in mid-November, they were called to a meeting with their parents and told they shouldn't pursue the matter. Friends tell me there has been a discernible difference in the atmosphere on campus since, and security has increased.

The crackdown on migrant workers and their student allies is not surprising. The China Labour Bulletin, a labour rights organisation based in Hong Kong, lists nearly three thousand instances of collective action taken by workers in China since January 2017. If this were to coalesce into a movement, the consequences would be enormous. According to the National Bureau of Statistics roughly 287 million rural migrants were living and working in Chinese cities in 2017. The country's rapid economic growth since the 1980s has to a large degree depended on their labour. But they have received scant reward. Rural migrants have limited access to public resources in cities because their household registration (*hukou*) ties them

to the place of their or their parents' birth. Their children cannot easily access state education in cities and frequently end up in overcrowded and unregulated private schools. Migrants are barred from public housing and can't afford high private rents, with the result that many of them end up in substandard (and sometimes subterranean) accommodation provided by their employer. I once worked at an English language school where five teaching assistants slept in a room I had originally taken for a cupboard. Others live on the outskirts of cities in unsafe structures from which they are periodically evicted by demolition squads; in 2017 a fire broke out in a migrant settlement in Beijing, killing 19 people.

The government is well aware of migrant workers' dissatisfaction and has implemented a series of reforms to the *hukou* system over the past 15 years. In 2003 it ended its policy of detaining and repatriating migrant workers to their original place of residence after a public outcry at the death of 27-year-old Sun Zhigang, who was killed by police in Guangzhou after failing to produce the correct papers. Since 2014, the government has made it far easier to register for a *hukou* in a small or medium-sized city. The Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security reported that the number of migrant workers with basic medical insurance at the end of 2017 was 62 million, an increase of nearly 24.6 per cent since 2012. Even so, the proportion of migrant workers with basic medical cover remains under 22 per cent (the government doesn't supply this

statistic). While it might be easier to get an urban *hukou* than it used to be, it usually only applies in urban areas in the province where you already live. Population caps have recently been set for Beijing and Shanghai (at 23 and 25 million respectively), which will result in more large-scale demolition of migrant housing. If you get an urban *hukou*, it requires you to give up your rural land rights, leaving more land available for sale to private companies, further fracturing struggling rural communities.

The Chinese Communist Party has always pushed a narrative of progress. The statistic it highlights most often is the number of people lifted out of poverty. Its achievement here is not insignificant: the number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 66.6 per cent in 1990 to 0.7 per cent in 2015, according to the World Bank. But bringing people above the poverty line to work inhumane hours for subsistence wages with no social security, all in the service of corporate profit, doesn't seem like the mission of a revolutionary Marxist organisation. And it isn't just students and workers who are unhappy with this situation, but intellectuals and party members too.

Among those protesting in Shenzhen in August were Maoists from the internet forum Utopia, all of whom are CCP members and retired cadres. Utopia is a platform for China's New Left, which emerged when the events of 1989 quashed hopes of reform along liberal democratic lines. The New Left is unambiguously anti-capitalist and ambivalently pro-Mao. The Utopia website recommends articles by New Left Chinese intellectuals, as well as publishing its own content. On its homepage when I last visited were links to articles by academics from Renmin University, the Southwestern University of Finance and Economics, Tianjin Normal University, Northeast Forestry University and Beihang University. There is the potential here for a very broad alliance, composed of workers, students, intellectuals and disillusioned party members. This, along with the destabilising effects of a widespread

migrant workers' movement, is enough to make the CCP nervous. It has reacted in exactly the way one would expect – with blunt force – but I suspect it is particularly afraid of vocal Marxist resistance. Posters proclaiming the nation's commitment to socialist values are everywhere; commemorating Marx's bicentenary last year, Xi Jinping said that 'Marx's theories still twinkle with the dazzling light of truth!' Marxist critiques are unsettling because they point to the inequities in Chinese society, while remaining within the state's ideological framework.

The students know exactly what they are doing. In a manifesto posted on WeChat on 9 December, and swiftly removed by the censors, the PKU Marxist Society stated that university bureaucrats were 'not fellow wayfarers on our journey to study Marxist-Leninism and serve the masses'. (The president of the university is appointed by the CCP Central Committee.) The 20 September letter mentioned both Marx's birthday and PKU's long history of Marxist activism (many of the founding members of the CCP worked at the university, including Mao, who was a librarian's assistant there). Their report on the living and working conditions of university staff approaches Mao's suggestion that 'knowledge of any kind is inseparable from direct experience' when it states that 'it is only through practice that you can produce genuine knowledge.' The report repeatedly shows how the conditions of workers fail to meet the standards required by existing labour laws. There shouldn't be anything revolutionary about what they are saying. Yet there is.





# EUROPE

## GERMANY: THE FAR RIGHT, CONSERVATIVE LEFTISM AND HOW TO GET RID OF THAT SHIT

*By JoJo, a Fightback correspondent based in Germany.*

In this piece, I attempt to analyze some strategies against the rise of the far right in Germany, including conservative leftism. I will argue that in order to push back fascism as well as conservative leftism, we will need to develop a new progressive leftist narrative that not only connects current struggles but also explores ways to overcome capitalism and what a post-capitalist society might look like. I'm using examples from the German context as it is the one best known to me but since developments are similar elsewhere, I hope folks might find this piece helpful.

In Germany, like elsewhere, we have seen a normalization of the far right over the last couple of years. In Fightback's magazine on "Migrant and Refugee rights" from June 2017 I wrote about the rise of the AfD, the "Alternative for Germany", Germany's far right party<sup>1</sup>. Things haven't changed a lot since then, the AfD now has seats in all regional parliaments as well as the national parliament and is scoring around 12-15% in polls nation-wide and over 20% in East Germany. This is still accompanied with far right mobilizations on the streets, most notably last August in Chemnitz (a town in East Germany) where Neo-Nazis and other far right activists exploited the killing of a 35-year old man for their racist agenda because of the suspect's refugee status, leading to large racist demonstrations and riots.

The Left was not able to stop this development, despite some successful antifascist mobilizations. Until last year, confronting the AfD was mainly the job of the radical leftist activist milieu alone, other forces did seldomly show up or organize counter-protests. But Chemnitz among some other factors seems to have changed that: In October, a demonstration under the motto *Unteilbar* ("undividable") mobilized almost a quarter million people in Berlin. It was mainly targeted against the AfD, but also made a clear point that the social question and the cause for open borders are not to be played out against each other. Trade unionists, migrants, queers and feminists marched together as they saw their interests connected to each other. In addition, demonstrations of *Seebrücke* ("sea bridge"), demanding the decriminalization of NGOs who rescue refugees in the Mediterranean, also brought surprisingly high numbers of people to the streets.

Other progressive social movements have been growing as well: The climate movement is becoming bigger and more successful, mainly around the struggle to save Hambach forest which is being cut down to make place for an open cast lignite mine, but also with the school students' "Fridays for Future" protests. There can also be seen a rise in feminist organizing, leading up to a women's and queers' strike on March 8 (international

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<sup>1</sup> <https://fightback.org.nz/2017/05/03/the-alternative-for-germany-a-chronicle-of-the-rise-of-a-far-right-party/>

A black silhouette of a hand holding a sign. The hand is wearing a watch with a round face and a dark strap.

**#UNTEILBAR**

A black silhouette of a hand holding a sign. The hand is wearing a sleeve with two vertical stripes.

**FRIDAYS FOR  
OUR FUTURE** 

A black silhouette of a hand holding a sign. The hand is wearing a bracelet with several round beads.

**Frauen\*streik**

When we stop working  
the world stands still



women's day).

Also, within the Left, there are some interesting debates going on around "new class politics"<sup>2</sup>. Those who argue for "new class politics" want the Left to return their focus to class issues, to organize and push forward class struggles, but without just repeating "old" class politics. Instead, the Left should take into account today's composition of the working class and see feminist and anti-racist issues connected to the class struggle.

These developments, in theory as well as in praxis, signal a shift from mere antifascist counter-activism towards more actively pushing forward an own agenda, an own narrative of solidarity. It will be crucial to develop class struggles and connect them with feminist and anti-racist issues, since the far right attempts to play out the white (and mostly male) working class against migrants and other minorities. Even though the AfD is a cross-class project and has indeed a quite neoliberal program, it seems to be attractive for white male low-income workers who over-proportionally vote for them. This has of course a lot to do with their attempt to save white and male privilege, but is also connected to their class position. Without a visible and believable left anti-capitalist narrative, a far right populist program gives people the opportunity to express their diffuse anger which is rooted in their miserable situation and exploitation, but is then being redirected against migrants and "corrupt elites". Of course, determined AfD supporters will not be convinced by left wing ideas and the connection of class struggle with feminism and anti-racism. "New class politics" is rather a strategy that aims to make a left narrative visible on the long term, so that this anger can be rationalized and directed towards the proper goal, before it is even redirected by far right populism.

However, the debates about how to react

<sup>2</sup> Mostly within the undogmatic leftist monthly newspaper *Analyse&Kritik*, e.g. see here (unfortunately only in German): [https://www.akweb.de/ak\\_s/ak627/18.htm](https://www.akweb.de/ak_s/ak627/18.htm)

to the rise of the far right does not lead everyone on the Left to take a stance of borderless solidarity with all oppressed and exploited people (which is basically what "new class politics" and the social movements briefly described above have in common). Just like in the Anglosphere and in other countries as well, some on the Left think that they can win back right-wing voters by compromising their stance on migration issues and focusing primarily on the "white working class" (to be more precise, they sometimes do not even focus on the "white working class", but abandon class analysis all together for a mere populism of positioning "the people" against "the elites"). The most prominent figure of this development in Germany is Sahra Wagenknecht, parliamentary leader of the party *Die Linke* ("the Left"). Over the last couple of years, Wagenknecht repeatedly draw attention with anti-refugee remarks. In October 2016, she even took part in a double interview with AfD-leader Frauke Petry in which she agreed with her on some points. Her positions are heavily debated within *Die Linke*, however the party still doesn't throw her off her chair, probably because they are afraid to lose votes, as Wagenknecht is currently the party's most notable and charismatic politician.

Last year, Sahra Wagenknecht launched the self-acclaimed movement *Aufstehen* ("Stand Up") together with other politicians mostly from *Die Linke*, but also from the Social Democrats and the Greens<sup>3</sup>. *Aufstehen* claims to be a collective movement of the Left, bringing together members of different parties and non-party members. It is inspired by *La France Insoumise*, a similar movement in France launched by left-wing nationalist Jean-Luc Mélenchon, and the Momentum platform for Jeremy Corbyn in the UK. *Aufstehen* has so far not been particularly active in any protests, but has already around 167,000 members (as of

<sup>3</sup> <https://aufstehen.de/> for those who understand German

December 2018). It is a perfect example of conservative leftism, defined by Fightback's Daphne Lawless as "a reactionary, undialectical opposition to various aspects of neoliberalism" which "essentially consists in trying to apply yesterday's solutions to today's problems"<sup>4</sup>. With *Aufstehen* this means trying to bring back the social welfare state of the post-war years, while ignoring that this kind of social welfare state could only exist in this certain historical moment, with a Fordist production model and the system competition with the Eastern bloc. It could also only exist in the framework of the nation state, was based on the exploitation of the Global South, and was also deeply connected with traditional gender and family norms. It is thus only consistent that Wagenknecht and *Aufstehen* are mostly ignoring gender, sexuality, race and migration issues if they are not openly opposing these emancipatory struggles. *Aufstehen* did not take part in the big *Unteilbar*-demonstration and Wagenknecht said this was due to *Unteilbar*'s position in favor of open borders. However, some local branches took part in the march nevertheless and criticized Wagenknecht for her announcement which they had no say in, since *Aufstehen* so far still does not have a democratic decision-making process. So, it would be false to accuse all *Aufstehen* members of red-brown politics, as some on the antifascist Left do. Instead, it might be interesting to examine why it is so successful in gaining members.

*Aufstehen* does professional social media work that addresses issues of social inequality in a relatable and understandable way, often with personal examples of *Aufstehen* supporters and offers easy ways to get organized, online as well as in many local groups. This is a level of accessibility often lacking within the radical Left. It is also not a big surprise that in lack of a progressive anti-capitalist alternative, the answer of many people who are discontent with neo-

liberalism is to return to some way of social welfare state, especially if they still grew up in such a welfare state.

So I would argue that even though it is necessary to critique conservative leftism, the best way to overcome it is to actually offer a progressive alternative to it.

What could such an alternative look like? As a Marxist, the answer is of course that I do not want some kind of more "social" capitalism, but that capitalism should be abolished. However, this cannot stay a mere slogan. Instead, we need to think about what capitalism is and what can replace it. The traditional Marxist models of state socialism has certainly failed and cannot be repeated (that attempt would be just another kind of conservative leftism). To develop new strategies of overcoming capitalism it is helpful to look at the critiques of "actually existing socialism" made by ultra-left currents such as the Communization or the Value-Criticism current<sup>5</sup>. According to them, traditional Marxists' fault was and is to reduce Marx's theory of capital to class struggle. The goal thus became for the proletariat to take over state power from the bourgeoisie leading to a nationalization of value production, to state capitalism, instead of the abolition of capital. Instead of reducing Marxism to a question of power relations between two classes, the ultra-leftists developed a fundamental critique of the basic categories of capitalism such as commodity, value, work, money, capital and state. In a capitalist society, these appear fetishized (a concept developed by Marx in the first chapter of *Capital Vol. 1*), which briefly means they seem to be natural, a-historical and thus unchangeable categories to the "common sense", but are actually the product of specific social relations. Fetishism does not mean that the capitalist class somehow tricks the workers into thinking that these categories are unchangeable, but rather it is

4 <https://fightback.org.nz/2016/02/15/against-conservative-leftism/>

5 English texts by the German value-criticism journal Krisis are available here: <http://www.krisis.org/navi/english/>



a process that happens “behind everyone’s back” and affects workers as well as capitalists. To abolish capitalism would then mean to abolish these basic categories, to establish a mode of production where things are not produced as commodities, where they are not exchanged and where therefore would be no money (or no equivalent such as “labour time vouchers” as in some traditional Marxist and anarchist models of economy). Instead, it would be the realization of Marx’ slogan “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need”.

In their recently published book “Kapitalismus aufheben”, Simon Sutterlützi and Stefan Meretz, both coming from a background of Value-Criticism as well as Critical Psychology, elaborate what such a society might look like<sup>6</sup>. They call it “commonism”, a play of words with “communism” and “commons”. Commons are resources that no-one owns, but that are available for everyone to use for free, often self-managed in a non-hierarchical way by those who are using it. They are a form of economy that exists beyond state or market. Commons exist already under capitalism, e.g. in form of open source software, and actually precede capitalism, as under feudalism, meadows and forests were often used as commons. The project of commonism would then be to extend these already existing commons and to replace private property with commons. The internet will probably play an important role here, not only because many forms of modern commons are being developed here, but also because it offers possibilities to manage the commons and to coordinate different commons-projects in a flat-hierarchical manner. This does however not replace the revolutionary expropriation of the resources that are now in private hands and need to be made common. In a commonist society, everyone would be able to feel safe since everyone’s needs would be fulfilled instead of the fulfilment of needs being

dependent on market mechanisms, that always leave people behind, as in capitalism.

Capitalism produces misery and fear on a daily basis, especially since its fundamental crisis that’s been going on since 2008. It is no surprise that in a society based on competition and exclusion this leads to authoritarian reactions and people’s diffuse anger often being directed at scapegoats. So, in order to tackle the rise of the far right, mere antifascist counter-activism, even though it is necessary, is not enough. Instead, the Left needs to push forward an own narrative of universal solidarity. The diverse social movements described above as well as the approach of “new class politics” are a starting point of that. However, they often lack a clear vision about how capitalism can be overcome and what can replace it. Without such a vision I think a discontent with the neoliberal status quo often tends to lead to conservative leftist reactions as it is much more satisfying to cling to a “better past” than to have no idea what we’re actually fighting for at all. I suggest that the concept of commons could be such a progressive vision, not only because they fulfil the communist promise “from each according to their ability, to each according to their need”, but also because they are prefigured already today and thus are not just some abstract idea, but something that people can already experience in some niches. In fact, social movements often tend to produce social dynamics of commoning, when people come together in solidarity, establish protest camps, share food and other resources according to people’s needs or squat buildings or squares and thus make them common.

To be able to win against the far right and against conservative leftism, we need social movements of universal solidarity and a progressive alternative to capitalism as offered by the concept of commons.

<sup>6</sup> The book can be read online at [commonism.us](http://commonism.us) unfortunately again only in German

# MIDDLE EAST

## FIGHTBACK LAUNCHING 'SYRIA: REVOLUTION AND COUNTER-REVOLUTION' PAMPHLET IN ENGLISH AND ARABIC

"The people want the fall of the regime."  
Having emerged from the Tunisian revolution and the wider 'Arab Spring', this slogan played a role in setting off the Syrian revolution when a group of youths were arrested for graffitiing it in the city of Dara'a. Citizens from many faiths mobilised in the streets of Syria, calling for democratic reform, before Assad's military repression set off the ongoing crisis we see today – the greatest refugee crisis in a generation.

However, misinformation about the Syrian revolution abounds. You don't have to go far on the internet to find claims that the Syrian revolution was a CIA conspiracy from the start – a claim made by Chris Trotter on New Zealand's most popular left blog.

As put in the book *Burning Country: Syrians in Revolution and War*, "the start of solidarity is correcting the narrative." Fightback therefore seeks to help correct the narrative with a collection of articles on the Syrian revolution.

The pamphlet will contain five articles by Fightback members, including two book reviews, an interview with a resettled Syrian Australian, and other analysis. Rather than making grand uninformed claims about the war, this material seeks to engage with work by Syrian revolutionaries, and encourage wider engagement.

The pamphlet will be published in both English and Arabic, and in both electronic and printed forms.

كتيب عن "سوريا: الثورة والثورة المضادة" باللغة الإنجليزية والعربية

إن شعار "الشعب يريد اسقاط النظام". بعد أن خرج من الثورة التونسية ووبشكل اوسع من "الربيع العربي"، لعب دوراً في إطلاق الثورة السورية وذلك عندما تم اعتقال مجموعة من الشبان بسبب كتابة هذا الشعار على جدران مدينة درعا. احتشد المواطنون من مختلف الأديان في شوارع سوريا، داعين إلى الإصلاح الديمقراطي، قبل أن يؤدي القمع العسكري للأسد إلى الأزمة الحالية التي نشهدها اليوم - وهي أكبر أزمة لاجئين لهذا الجيل.

إن المعلومات الخاطئة حول الثورة السورية هي معلومات زائفة، وليس علينا الذهاب بعيداً على الانترنت للعثور على مزاعم بأن الثورة السورية هي مؤامرة من قبل سي أي إي "وكالة الاستخبارات المركزية الأميركية" - وهو ادعاء قدمه مارتين برادبري، مدون "اليسار" الأكثر شعبية في نيوزيلندا.

وكما ورد في كتاب "الأرض المحروقة: سوريا في الثورة والحرب" يبدأ التضامن في تصحيح السرد ومنظمة فايت باك "دافع" تسعى للمساعدة في ذلك من خلال طرح كتيب لمجموعة من المقالات حول الثورة السورية.

يحتوي هذا الكتيب على خمس مقالات من أعضاء حزب فايت باك "دافع"، تتضمن هذه المقالات مراجعة لكتابين ومقابلة مع سورية استرالية تم توطينها وتحليلات أخرى. فبدلاً من تقديم ادعاءات كبيرة غير معلنة عن الحرب، تسعى هذه المادة إلى الانخراط في العمل مع الثوريين السوريين وتشجيع المشاركة على نطاق أوسع.

سيتم نشر الكتيب باللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية، وفي كتي النماذج الإلكترونية والمطبوعة.





# NORTH AMERICA

## USA: TRUMP AND SCIENCE

*By Ansar Fayyazuddin, reprinted from Solidarity (US).*

WITH REAGAN AT the helm in the 1980s, I recall a sense that we had reached the nadir of U.S. political life. His unembarrassed ignorance and gaffes, his invention and frequent use of the “sound bite,” all represented instances of the general degradation of politics and political discourse. Sadly, the intervening years confirmed them to not be the nadir but the beginning of a precipitous decline that continues to this day. The latest iteration has yielded a specimen who further confirms that Reagan and W. represented not the lowest points of politics, but stations on a downhill trajectory that shows no sign of coming to an end.

Among the most significant breaks was the assault on inconvenient scientific facts, those that threatened the basic commitments of neoliberals — unregulated markets, expansionist global political and military intervention, and the buildup of conventional and nuclear arms with the help of private industry.

Wherever scientific consensus clashed with these priorities, scientific “doubts” were introduced by practiced industry hacks peddling uncertainty where there was none. (1) Thus one found industry lobbies formed to sow seeds of doubt about the harmfulness of cigarette smoke, the reality of “nuclear

winter,” the unfeasibility of anti-ballistic missile technology, and the efficacy of regulation in checking environmental disaster and global warming.

Undermining inconvenient facts, whether scientific or not, has continued in practice throughout the various changes of guard — Republican or Democrat. Obama was the first person I heard using the oxymoronic term “clean coal” before Trump’s use of the same term made it an object of ridicule.

Obama was no denier of climate change, yet on his record in office he may as well have been one. His policies, whether on offshore drilling or on pipelines, swayed with the political winds but fundamentally did nothing to mitigate climate change.

### **Trump’s distinctive barbarism**

It’s in this context of decades of denial of inconvenient scientific and historical facts that we arrive at the present. Reagan through Obama seeded doubts about inconvenient facts; they or their agents suggested that there were cracks in the scientific consensus even when there were none.

Trump represents, first and foremost, a change of style. But whatever the continuities in substance, Trump represents a distinct



form of barbarism that requires dedicated analysis if we are to understand its roots — i.e. its relationship to the past — and its distinctive characteristics and meaning.

Trump's presidency had virtually instantaneous repercussions for scientists. As I have discussed elsewhere in these pages, the introduction of the Muslim ban threw international scientific collaboration, recruitment of scientists and the ability of international students to pursue their studies in the United States into immediate jeopardy.

The tumult and trauma, physical and psychological, was shared across academic disciplines as well as outside the academy. I do not think that full stock of the consequences has yet been taken. It is not clear how many potential incoming graduate students as a consequence of the ban, chose not to come to this country or were denied admission or student visas.

Similarly, I am unaware of any studies on how the ban has affected where international scientific conferences or collaborative meetings are held. These are difficult numbers to ascertain and parse. The ban has not been lifted but continues to be contested, and cannot but chill the spirit of collaboration and shared sense of purpose that are necessary for science to flourish as an international endeavour.

Trump's relationship with scientists and science research funding agencies has been tense at best. He proposed severe cuts in the 2018 budgets of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Energy (DOE) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). Additional cuts were proposed in the budgets of the EPA and NOAA (the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration).

These proposed cuts were rejected by Congress and the budget that was eventually passed included modest funding hikes for the NIH, DOE and the NSF.

Trump has not filled key advisory posts usually occupied by scientists. As of today, there is no Director of the Office of Science and Technology and no Associate Director of Science. This is consistent with how Trump is managing other departments, such as the State Department, where many diplomatic and other posts remain vacant. It is not clear how to read this bizarre situation. When Trump has appointed people, his choices



have been laughable for the transparent cronyism, lack of qualifications, and conflicts of interests of the nominees.

Scott Pruitt at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was installed to undermine the mission of the EPA and this he proceeded to do. However, like Trump himself Pruitt possesses a self-destructive streak, and his time at the EPA was marked by a series of scandals — personal profiteering, spendthrift ways with EPA money for his own comfort, and open fraternization with corporate lobbyists finally leading to his resignation. Pruitt's replacement, Andrew Wheeler, is a former lobbyist for the coal industry and can hardly be considered an improvement.

### **Rampant deregulation**

Trump has distinguished himself in the level of open interference in the operations of the EPA (and other agencies), particularly on issues of environmental regulation.

As an example, consider the Clean Power Plan, which was introduced by the EPA in 2015 to reduce carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions by electric power plants. The plan required states to formulate strategies to reduce emissions from the electricity production sector by 32% from 2005 levels by the year 2030.

The CPP was immediately challenged in the courts (by then Oklahoma Attorney General Pruitt among others) and, in an astounding act, suspended by the Supreme Court until the legal challenge would work its way through the courts. As the signature attempt to comply with the Paris Agreement, the rule's immediate suspension was a significant blow.

Under Trump, the CPP was essentially rescinded by executive order which asked the EPA to revisit the CPP and replace it if necessary. The EPA under Pruitt then proceeded to argue that the CPP was an overreach of its authority, and proposed to replace it with a new rule.

This rule, released in August of this year, called the Affordable Clean Energy (ACE)

Rule, seems primarily designed to keep coal-based electric power production in business while recommending minor “upgrades” of coal plants to reduce emissions. Thus, the regulatory force of the CPP is replaced with optional industry-friendly “upgrades.”<sup>(2)</sup>

Trump's meddling with the EPA and other departments, like the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has led to the weakening of important regulations and the repeal of bans. The close relationship that the USDA under Trump has with Dow Chemical Company is of particular concern.<sup>(3)</sup>

The Chief Scientist position at the USDA was recently filled by Scott Hutchins, a high-level and longterm Dow executive whose financial entanglements with agribusiness are deep. His commitment to chemical pesticides is not surprising given his long association with Dow.

As the Union of Concerned Scientists reports, large donations from Dow to the Trump inaugural fund, seem to have paid off. One example is the EPA's decision not to pursue a ban on the Dow pesticide chlorpyrifos, which has been shown by the EPA's own studies to be damaging to the development of children.

Attacks on emissions standards for toxic chemicals and waste products, the lifting of restrictions on fossil fuel extraction and transport, and other deregulatory acts are virtually a daily occurrence. These rollbacks are being closely tracked by a number of organizations but a good resource is the website maintained by the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University.

The Sabin Center is also monitoring the Trump regime's attacks on science, particularly climate science. They have developed a Silencing Science Tracker (SST), which already has 155 entries mainly centred on silencing climate change-related science.

The EPA has lost over 1600 employees in the first 18 months of the Trump regime. These appear to be due to extreme demoralization as a result of the active

undermining of the central projects and purpose of the EPA. A significant number of the departing employees are scientists and researchers, with likely a lasting impact on the EPA for the foreseeable future.

### **Anti-science or neoliberal**

Trump is often characterized as being anti-science and, more generally, against fact-based thinking. Much that Trump does and says certainly suggests that this view is correct. However, there are important aspects that are missed when we characterize Trump, climate change deniers and others of that ilk as being anti-science.

The same people who espouse some scientifically untenable positions hold other views that are in the main perfectly compatible with science and empirical data. Indeed, it would be difficult for them to function without having a largely science-compatible worldview. Their selective fact-defying positions are not random but determined by their very real material interests.

An important example of this was exposed within the past few years by Inside Climate News. They broke the detailed eye-opening story of how Exxon had perpetrated a climate change-denying fraud that defied and suppressed the findings of their own scientists. In other words, the science that Exxon itself funded and produced was incompatible with its public pronouncements about the effect of fossil fuels on global warming.

As the research of their scientists had the potential to undermine their profit-making model, Exxon opted for suppressing the science instead. This example (along with so many others such as from the tobacco industry) illustrates the problem with treating our political opponents as irrational and anti-science. They are in fact perfectly rational neoliberal actors whose interests lie in suppressing or denying inconvenient facts. In the end, it is not so much the facts where we disagree but rather the kind of world we

want to live in.

It is also essential to keep in mind the historical roots of much that Trump is perpetrating. We have lived through 17 years of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, characterized by their singular length, loss of life and destruction of ways of living. More generally, a completely dehumanized view of Muslims has been a necessary concomitant of this endless war. The (at first sight) arbitrary selection of countries singled out by Trump for his ban is taken straight from the openly racist legislation introduced by a Republican and signed into law by Obama in 2015. Trump's Muslim ban would not have been possible without the virulent Islamophobia sustained and stoked particularly by the previous two regimes.

### **The power of magical thinking**

Meanwhile, opportunist neoliberals have become self-described climate warriors, among them the last two mayors of my home, New York City: Michael Bloomberg and Bill de Blasio. Bloomberg must have his own lexicon according to which he is both a "libertarian"[\(5\)](#) and an environmentalist.

Under both Bloomberg and de Blasio, subway and bus fares have risen steadily and in tandem with the decline in quality of public transportation. Their legacies are inconsistent with their self-proclaimed commitment to the environment. Both promote neoliberal market-based "solutions" such as divestment and carbon trading while doing nothing to control emissions by, for example, committing to making public transportation free or, at least, affordable. Naomi Klein, in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, shows that the insatiable thirst for profit, the motive force of capitalism, is at the root of the climate crisis and incompatible with climate justice no matter whether in its "green" disguise or not. Her chapters on geotechnology are to me the most book's compelling, and address a serious problem that we face — the use of science to promote what Klein calls "magical



thinking.”

Whether the promise of dimming the sun or extracting carbon from the atmosphere, these “solutions” to the climate crisis do not require changing anything about the social world, only the establishment of an imagined physical and chemical balance through the insertion of technologies into a world that remains otherwise unchanged.

As Klein shows, these fantasies are based on unreasonable simplifications that are incompatible with preserving the complex ecosystem that is the very basis of life as we experience it. If the parameters of science require finding solutions to complex problems within the strictures of capitalism, we will remain hamstrung to a narrow range of the possibilities of science.

Science emerges from engaging with the world. What we call theory and experiment are impossible without each other. However, in the world of professional politics, science is reduced only to theory, indeed to something even more impoverished — a set of rhetorical positions about the world.

It isn’t surprising then when supposedly disparate and incompatible positions seem to lead to the same actions, which quite often is a complete lack of action. Science, like poetry, “makes nothing happen.” We must bring to science our independent moral sensibility and from it fashion a better world.

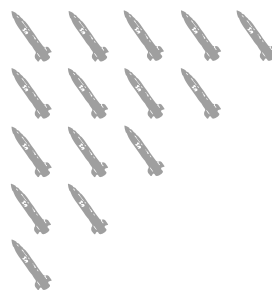
## Notes

1. The issue of industry sponsored scientific doubt is covered extensively in the excellent book by Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt*.

2. See the EPA’s own side-by-side comparison summarized in the document [https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-08/documents/ace-cpp\\_side\\_by\\_side.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2018-08/documents/ace-cpp_side_by_side.pdf).

3. See the Union of Concerned Scientists blog <https://blog.ucsusa.org/karen-perry-stillerman/at-the-trump-usda-the-d-stands-for-dow-for-more-details>.  
[back to text](#)

4. I experienced first hand the “libertarian” Bloomberg’s New York Police Department during the anti-RNC demonstrations of 2004, Occupy in 2011 and the day-to-day operations of the NYPD with its stop and frisk harassment of people of color, Muslim surveillance and other illiberal tactics which characterized his entire tenure, including his illegitimate third term. De Blasio’s signature issue on the campaign trail was reforming the NYPD but his record is that of Bloomberg’s “broken windows” policing and surveillance of minorities.





# OCEANIA/ PACIFIC

## AUSTRALIA: WHY I NO LONGER SUPPORT #CHANGETHEDATE

*This article by Luke Pearson is reprinted from the Aboriginal-led website  
IndigenousX. Please consider donating to their patreon:  
[patreon.com/IndigenousX](https://patreon.com/IndigenousX).*

You want a day to celebrate Australia. I want an Australia that's worth celebrating.

In the past I have supported the #changethedate campaign.

Until recently, when you searched 'change the date' on Google in Australia the first entry was even an article I wrote a few years back titled 'Why we should change the date of Australia Day'.

It is still the most successful article on this website, by far.

I had hoped that there were enough Australians who would agree that celebrating Invasion is a pretty shit thing to do, and that changing the date could provide a catalyst for creating a country worthy of celebration. However, after seeing the rise of the #changethedate campaign I have come to the opinion that there are too many people who seem to think that the problem with Australia Day rests solely on the day we celebrate it, not with what we are celebrating. I don't really feel that Australia, where we sit right now, is worth celebrating.

Not just the actions of 230 years ago, or a century ago, or 50 or even 15 years ago that are problematic.

It is those things that exist today that are so problematic that I couldn't in good faith celebrate our nation as a whole. A lot of that is tied up in our denial of history and our collective refusal to make any meaningful

steps to reconcile it, but it extends beyond that too.

A simple observation would be to point out that there are only two events where we can be guaranteed to see white people wearing flag capes – on Australia Day and at neo-Nazi rallies.

Moving an overly politicised and problematic day to another date won't change that.

A country that is content with Indigenous incarceration rates sometimes going up to as high as 100% in individual prisons, even though we represent 3% of the population, is not one I really want to celebrate anyway, regardless of what date it is on.

Especially not when you look at those incarcerated often dealing with issues of FASD, severe hearing loss, intergenerational trauma, or abuse at the hands of the state.

Many people whose only real crime is being poor; poor in a country made wealthy off the backs of Indigenous peoples' dispossession, exploitation and exclusion from the opportunities created within colony.

A country that refuses to ever hold authorities to account for the deaths of Indigenous people in custody is one that does not deserve a party.

And that's just scratching the surface of issues to do with incarceration. There are countless other issues in countless other areas across the colony in health, education,



media, housing... you name it.

We have people homeless on their homelands while billions have been ripped out of those same lands through mining.

We have communities whose water is poisoned.

People who are routinely punished for not applying for jobs that don't exist.

We have people whose languages were stolen from their parents and grandparents and today we act like teaching people their languages in school would somehow be doing them a disservice.

We have corporates who we applaud for hiring Indigenous people even if the government has to pay them to do it.

We acknowledge the traditional owners at events, but we don't acknowledge what happened to change them from 'owners' to 'traditional owners'.

How many of us even know what happened right under our feet to make that change? In detail. Do you know the names? Do you know the sacred sites and the massacre sites?

How can we acknowledge what we don't even know?

That is not to say that there aren't amazing and beautiful people, places and actions all across Australia that are worthy of celebration, but most of those things for me exist in spite of the colonial project, not because of it.

We have wonderful slogans of a fair go for all, or of being a lucky country. For years we have had politicians ignore racism by calling Australia 'the most successful multicultural country on earth', but now that they are trying to move away from the spirit of multiculturalism to a more open admittance that the Australian-ness of any non-white migrant is always conditional, and that their citizenship can and will be withdrawn at a minute's notice. In this environment even the lie of being multicultural has needed to be downgraded to 'the most successful migrant nation'.

These are the lies Australia tells itself, not to aspire to a greater future, but to deny our past and our present. This is why we changed the International Day of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and made it Harmony Day instead. Not because we had eliminated racial discrimination, but because we wanted to pretend that it doesn't exist.

This is what Australia does with its symbolic gestures. It uses them to pretend that no further changes are required.

And that is why I cannot in good conscience support #changethedate anymore. If public pressure for changing the date grows to sufficient level I don't doubt that the major parties would do a 180 to support it. But because it would be a responsive vote grab rather than reflecting any sincerely belief or aspirations for a better country, they would continue to dismiss and undermine Indigenous aspirations and to avoid the tough questions of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

So, change the country first, and then we can talk about a date.

Show me a country with a Treaty or Treaties that are robust. A country with meaningful Indigenous representation in decision making that affects us, at the local and the national level.

Show me a country where the greatest areas for Indigenous representation aren't in prisons, child removal, and suicide.

Show me a country that acknowledges not just its white supremacist origins, but its current state. A country that fights to eradicate racism and understands that we must be eternally vigilant against its resurgence once it is removed.

Show me a country that I can be proud of, that I can teach my children to be proud of, where they can grow up confident in the knowledge that this country doesn't see their very existence as a problem to be solved, and then I will talk about what could be a good date in the calendar year to throw a party for how awesome the country is.



Because right now, I just don't see a country worth celebrating, and I'm not willing to change the date in the hopes that it might come next year, or the year after that.

Every year more and media orgs at large plays #changethedate for clicks and sensationalism rather than to highlight issues or foster dialogue. Political parties pounce on it with such breathtaking hypocrisy that in the same breath they talk about being a free country and in the next about forcing local councils to hold celebrations and about dress codes for citizenship ceremonies. They hide behind a faux support of migrants to mask their support for white nationalism.

And for the record, the 26th of January will always remain Invasion Day, and Survival Day, and a Day of Mourning, because #LestWeForget.

Hopefully though, one day, Australia might become a country that I could celebrate, but

only if we name the changes that need to occur, and we work towards achieving them. Changing the date is one of the final steps one that list, not one of the first.

But even then, the goal should not be so that we can 'reconcile', or that we can all have a party together some day on a given date. It needs to be less about appeasing white guilt and more about supporting Indigenous empowerment.

The goal is a country that does not treat Indigenous people as a threat but instead recognises and respects the unique status of Indigenous peoples in Australia, and strives to weave that in to the national identity, decision making processes, and day to day life of the colony – even where that means some Indigenous people choose to withdraw from the communities and institutions that have so long rejected and disenfranchised us and create our own instead.





# SOUTH AMERICA

## VENEZUELA: THE PEOPLE NO LONGER WANT MADURO, AND NO ONE CHOSE GUAIDÓ

*This is a translation of a Spanish piece by **Marea Socialista**,  
a Venezuelan socialist group.*

The Venezuelan people, mobilized along all social sectors, taking to the streets from the poor neighbourhoods, is demonstrating that it is fed up with Maduro. The people will no longer tolerate the policies of hunger and destruction of labour rights, elimination of the right to healthcare and medicine shortages, degradation of public services, extreme corruption and routine repression.

This explains why a large part of the population mobilized to the marches called by the self-proclaimed Guaidó. Not because they are prepared to recognize whomever wants to snatch power, but because broad sectors of the population are fed up and don't want any more of this. Even those who work in the public sector who remain silent or are forced to go to the government's mobilizations to avoid retaliations at work, seeing their reception of CLAP subsidies affected, or endangering their Misión Vivienda homes. Word of mouth, within Chavism, also reflects exhaustion, annoyance and the progressive loss of fear.

Workers and the people have not been able to build an independent alternative of their own, to represent their real interests and anguish, and are trapped between the bureaucracy and capital. The result of this is the resurgence of polarization between

the politicians of a corrupt government that controls power, and the parliamentarians of the parties of the capitalists that exploit workers.

Because the bosses that finance and promote the opposition parties of the traditional right, are also benefited by paying the miserable wages imposed by the government of Maduro, the PSUV and the military. And their proposal is no different in respect to continue unloading the cost of the crisis on the people while they secure their profits.

From the National Assembly, they aim to form a new government and use the people's energy in their favour, because we lack strong organizations of our own to channel the struggle against Maduro's government. But the National Assembly and the United States cannot impose governments on the Venezuelan people; neither can Maduro. They are all usurpers and they fight over the control of the state to maintain the people subdued and exploited.

Our unions and popular organizations are largely destroyed, corrupted or subordinated to the state apparatus, and another part of them has ceded its political independence to the leaders of the capitalist class that exploits

us. This is why, not having yet escaped the authoritarian trap of Maduro, we are already falling into the trap of Guaidó's coup (of the Voluntad Popular party), backed by the United States, who defends its own interests, opposed to those of the Venezuelan people.

We are now in danger of a confrontation between two governments -both illegitimate, and one of them supported by the United States- escalating into a civil war, or more direct forms of imperialist intervention by the Trump administration. We must also alert that the government takes advantage of each attempted power grab by the right to unleash a wave of repression to submit the people and silence all protest.

In this situation, Marea Socialista calls on people to continue on the streets protesting against the oppressive government, but we must move with our own working class and people's agenda, and not behind the right wing parliamentarians or the PSUV bureaucracy, and we must not accept any foreign intervention.

Marea Socialista calls for uniting all who understand the necessity of building our own fighting organization, to raise a new political alternative of our class and popular sectors who are suffering, to defend our interests and rights.

- The people no longer want Maduro, and no one chose Guaidó.
- Popular referendum for the people

to legitimize all powers (Art. 71 of the Constitution).

- Renovation of the National Electoral Council to reclaim its independence and call for new elections.
- Emergency economic plan in favour of workers and the people, to confront the crisis, recover wages and access food.
- No to the relinquishing of sovereignty.
- No to the intervention and meddling of the United States and the Lima Group.
- Let's continue the struggle for our living conditions: wages, labour rights, public services, democratic rights.
- No coup or negotiations behind the people's backs.
- Political autonomy for workers and popular sectors.
- No more following the politicians of the ruling bureaucracy or the capitalists.
- Not bureaucracy, nor capital!
- They must all go!
- The people must exercise its sovereignty.
- No repression: liberation of all political prisoners, respect for human rights.
- For a government of the workers and the people, not of the traditional bourgeoisie nor of the "reddish" bourgeoisie.



# ABOUT FIGHTBACK

*Fightback* is a trans-Tasman socialist media project with a magazine, a website, and other platforms. We believe that a structural analysis is vital in the task of winning a world of equality and plenty for all. Capitalism, our current socio-economic system, is not only exploiting people and planet – but is designed to operate this way. Therefore we advocate a total break with the current system to be replaced by one designed and run collectively based on principles of freedom, mutual aid, and social need.

## OUR 10-POINT PROGRAMME

**Fightback stands for the following core programme, and for building institutions of grassroots power in the working class and oppressed groups to bring them about:**

1. **Constitutional transformation** based on indigenous self-determination and workers power. Indigenous and worker co-ops to operate as guardians over public resources.
2. **Secure, appropriate and meaningful work** for those who want it, with a shorter working week. The benefit system to be supplemented with a Universal Basic Income, removal of punitive sanctions.
3. **International working-class solidarity.** Close the Detention Centres. Open borders to Australia and Aotearoa, full rights for migrant workers. Recognise Pasefika rights to self-determination, Australia and Aotearoa to contribute to a 'no-strings' development fund for Pacific nations. Opposition to all imperialist ventures and alliances; neither Washington nor Moscow.
4. **No revolution without women's liberation.** Full funding for appropriate, community-driven abuse prevention and survivor support, free access to all reproductive technologies, public responsibility for childcare and other reproductive work. The right to full, safe expression of sexuality and gender identity.
5. **An ecosocialist solution** to climate change. End fossil fuel extraction, expand green technology and public transport, and radically restructure industrial food production.
6. **Freedom of information.** End corporate copyright policies in favour of creative commons. Public support for all media technologies, expansion of affordable broadband internet to the whole country. An end to government spying.
7. **Abolish prisons,** replace with restorative justice and rehabilitation.
8. **Universal right to housing.** Expansion of high-density, high-quality public housing, strict price controls on privately owned houses. Targeted support to end involuntary homelessness.
9. **Fully-funded healthcare** at every level. Move towards health system based on informed consent, remove inequities in accident compensation, opposition to "top-down" efforts to change working people's behaviour.
10. **Fully-funded education** at every level, run by staff and students. Funding for all forms of education and research, enshrining indigenous knowledge as a core part of the curriculum.

*More detail on this programme is available in our pamphlet What is Fightback?*





ANOTHER  
EUROPE IS  
POSSIBLE